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## **A Cultural Dimension of Tourist Products: a Polish-Japanese Case Study**

### **1. Culture and tourist products – a double bind**

Today the claim that culture is an inherent constituent of tourist products (cf. the definition of a tourist product, for example, by Middleton, 1996:89) is a commonplace statement. However, this fact does not make it a much less difficult challenge to make it a success on a global tourist market. Let me also stress that the challenge is even doubled because of a double presence of culture in tourist products. Firstly, a cultural dimension of a tourist product refers to the mother culture of the potential target customer who, while making his/her market decisions which tourist products to acquire, is strongly conditioned by its various manifestations, and more specifically by his/her culture-specific habits, knowledge, tastes, behaviours, ways of socializing and relating to people and of spending free time as well as experience of dealing with a stranger. Briefly speaking, his/her acquisition decisions are strongly influenced by his/her culture-bound expectations which, even subconsciously, s/he seeks to be met by the product. Secondly, culture, but this time the target culture built into a tourist product and understood as national, regional or ethnic culture which positively differentiates it from all other products on the market, should be also taken into consideration. As in the case of mother culture, target culture also embraces its material and non-material aspects, all of which stem from a given system of values. In most cases some tension, hopefully creative, results from a juxtaposition of the double aspect of culture present in a tourist product. When positively explored and treated as a product added value it can become its great market chance and its asset, but when approached without intercultural sensitivity, knowledge and understanding, a main reason of its failure.

An invented tradition seems to be a possible, although far from ideal, solution to the problem. The term was invented by Hosbawn and Ranger [2008] and it refers to a compromise between an authentic culture of a given ethnic group and its simplified and “civilized” version which is free from any drastic, unpleasant and difficult components hard to accept by users of other, usually western cultures. It treats culture as a pleasant and intellectually unchallenging, impoverished and uncomplicated *collage*, a colourful and attractive patchwork which, on the one hand, offers some new emotional experience but, on the other, does not make its participant get out of his/her stereotype-based perceptions. Thus invented tradition, which uses original rites and practices to invent their new, mass tourist-friendly versions, allows to experience him/her – because a mass tourist is its typical receiver – a new, in most cases exotic culture without the need to change almost anything neither in his/her system of values nor his/her identity make up. In a way it is a superficial, one-dimensional and shallow way of experiencing a culture without getting its deeper understanding and seeing its complex richness and diversity. Its main feature – its distinct otherness – which constitutes its true value has been blurred to avoid any difficulties and inner conflicts in its intellectual, emotional and somatic perception.

Invented traditions can be seen as one more piece of evidence of importance of culture in a tourist product. A far more straightforward and powerful message about its role in not only marketing but also branding places, has been formulated by Simon Anholt [2003, 2007, pp. 24–26], an international expert, a kind of a guru in the field. In his city brand hexagon model which can be also successfully applied to any other tourist product, culture plays a crucial role in every of its six components: presence, place, people, pre-requisites, pulse and potential. It serves as their common denominator, an element which goes across all of them and determines their proper performance. In “presence”, it is stressed a contribution of every place to a global dimension of science, culture and governance. People’s perception of pleasantness of a place and attractiveness of its buildings and parks, which characterises the second component “place”, is also greatly dependent on culture. It gives them their unique and special value and is a source of positive or negative emotional responses of the visitors. The same is true about the third and the fourth constituents, “pre-requisites” and “people”, respectively. In the first case culture is understood as an important determinant of the basic qualities and standards of public amenities and in the second it is manifested through the easiness with which foreigners can fit into a new community and share its language and culture. As for the fifth and the sixth elements, “pulse” and “potential”, also culture constitutes their basic feature. “Pulse” stands for interesting things a place possesses which can be discovered by a newcomer and which contribute to its perception as exciting. Needless to say, most of them belong to various manifestations of culture, from

folk and traditional, through elite to popular and alternative. As for the last category of “potential”, it embraces economic and educational opportunities which are embedded in the place and stand for its economic and symbolic that is cultural, capital. A mass tourist, whose visit is usually too short to make him/her fully appreciate this aspect of the place, will be probably interested in respective institutions, buildings and monuments which belong to business and educational culture and have been created in time. The stock exchange in Chicago, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Italian “La Scala” or the Library of the University of Salamanca with its unique collection of Inquisition books, to name only a few from their long list, are all both favourite tourist destinations and highly valued brand tourist products.

The value of Anholt’s city brand hexagon model lies not only in its showing a many facets of culture in it but also in allowing for their creative exploration to change a tourist product into a brand name and to make it thus become competitive on the ever growing global market. It thus helps to meet the challenge faced by every tour operator of how to satisfy the culture-specific expectations of his/her potential customer. A double culture-specific bind – mother vs. target culture – accounts for the fact that today very few if any tourist products can be addressed to anonymous and thus perfectly global customers. Most offers have to be tailored to the specific needs of the targeted segment of clients as it is the only chance to make them interested in the product.

## **2. Global changes in the mass tourist market**

The hospitality business seems to operate on a tourist market defined by two contradictory factors. On the one hand, it is a global market reaching global customers and addressing mass tourists, but on the other, we observe its growing segmentation and atomization. The second aspect results from both an appearance of new customers with a distinctively different cultural background and consequently their strongly differentiated needs, and a growing number of tourist agencies and tour operators. The latter, in order to enhance their competitiveness, tend to offer products corresponding to the culture-specific profiles of their potential global/glocal customers. How to successfully combine these two apparently clashing demands is a difficult task.

As already mentioned, one of significant factors demanding for new, more flexible ways of doing business by the hospitality scheme people are an enlarged number of tourist destinations and an appearance of new groups of tourists mainly in Europe and in North America. Firstly, exotic countries, e.g. Brazil, Kenya, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates have become rather easily accessible to most Europeans, especially from the former communist countries. Secondly, big groups of tourists from economically successful Asian countries, which from mainly tourist receiving countries have started sending their own tourists abroad, come to visit Europe. Apart from Japan which has been present

in the European tourist market since the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the programme “Ten millions”<sup>1</sup> was put in practice [“Jen na wakacjach”, 2003, p. 32], China and South Korea are newcomers. A new emerging pattern of tourist destinations serves as a good example of the operating changes and challenges for the hospitality business people.

In Europe the challenge is especially big for the former communist countries for at least two reasons. Firstly, unlike Western European countries whose cultural heritage has been recognized by Asian tourists and which consequently have already become their destinations, Central and Eastern Europe has to promote itself and encourage tourists to visit its countries which have a lot to offer. To show how difficult the task is let me stress that the Japanese tour operators, for example, expect that the tours of Poland offer more attractions than similar tours of top Western European countries such as Italy, France and Switzerland. Thus a Polish package tour programme should include, apart from a visit in Warsaw, Kraków, Wieliczka and Żelazowa Wola (where Frederic Chopin was born) and in other places from the UNESCO list, also some thematic visits allowing the tourist to get to know Polish folk culture, popular music, etc. to make their stay special and worth remembering. [Odagiri 2005].

Secondly, in many cases hospitality business in the post-communist countries is not only faced with similar difficulties as in Western Europe in the sense that it has to create culturally adequate products for their new customers, but they also have to adapt their infrastructure and performance to world quality standards. In many cases tourist facilities have to be built from the scratch because the quality of many hotels and other tourist amenities inherited from the previous epoch does not meet modern standards. It is also necessary to improve the service and make it strive towards excellence and tourist satisfaction. Despite operating changes which are deep and decisive by national standards, international evaluation criteria are not always met.

The necessary changes are deep and costly but they are worth the efforts as Asian tourists are considered to be very attractive. They are also a hope for the European hospitality business people who believe that the new group of tourists will substantially help them to be successful in the future.

### **3. Polish presence on Asian tourist markets**

Poland has undertaken an ambitious attempt to establish itself on the emerging Asian tourist markets. Japan has been ranked as the first target market among ten secondary tourist non-European markets followed by China and Korea [*Plan Działania POT* 2009] although as it is shown by the statistics, in 2007 the number

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<sup>1</sup> The national programme “Ten millions” served to encourage the Japanese to travel overseas after the difficult period after WWII when travels were forbidden and all the efforts and means were to be used to build the position of Japan in the world of business and economy.

of Korean tourist visiting Poland was bigger than the Japanese ones. However, in the period 1999–2007 in both cases it could be observed a steady growth of the number of tourists while the number of American tourists declined in the same period of time [www.intur.com.pl].

The reasons why Japan has got a priority in promotional efforts are at least twofold. Firstly, although the Japanese keep visiting Poland, the growth of their number is much less dynamic than of the Koreans. Thus it is necessary to strengthen their motivation and to show Poland as an attractive alternative, a country which is able to meet their expectations and offer more than the European countries of their traditional destinations. Secondly, the Japanese tend to make their travel decisions using the suggestions from their relatives and friends, especially those ones who have been to Poland or have got some information participating in various events promoting it. The value of the information is clearly shown by the results of the TNS OBOP polls in 2005 according to which 67% of the respondents were not tempted by a trip to Poland only because either they did not know anything about our country or they saw it as economically underprivileged, backward, distant and unknown [www.malopolskie.pl]. It should be also added that the history of the Polish-Japanese tourist relations is longer than in the case of Korea, which demands a revitalization of the picture of Poland and its becoming free from the existing stereotypes.

The above task is one of the basic preoccupations of the Institute of Polish Brand which stresses the fact that the picture of Poland in the world is still mainly created by its history, traditional culture and culture-specific events (Kraków and Warsaw) as well as such great Poles as John Paul II and the legend of the Solidarity movement – Lech Wałęsa. For the Japanese, Chopin and his music constitute an additional strong emotional link with Poland. One more element on the list of Polish associations is Auschwitz, a scar on Polish history and a painful wound which is still difficult to heal. Japanese tourists treat a visit to Auschwitz as a sad duty and an obligation. Its picture marks Poland in such a powerful way that it is for the Japanese a gloomy and depressing country with a tragic history, concentration camps, war, misery [Kubiszyn-Puka 2010]. What is missing from such a rather one-sided picture of Poland is its vision as a modern country, dynamic and culturally diversified, with beautiful nature, unspoiled and intact, a country proud of its hospitable people and of its past but also building its prosperous future. As in the slogan by Willy Ollins: *Poland. Creative tensions* [Analiza wyników badań wizerunku Polski... 2008, pp. 55–56] – it should use to its best its geographic location between the West and the East synergically exploring two different cultural and religious traditions as well as bridging them and serving as a cultural mediator between two Europes.

Such a picture is being conveyed, for example, to the Chinese whose tourists are seriously considered as a new and numerous segment of customers for the Polish tourist market. According to the research, the knowledge about Poland

of an average Chinese is very poor, nearly non-existent, which, to some extent, facilitates the task. The cognitive gap allows the creation of a fresh picture of Poland, without any prior positive or negative associations, which can more truly correspond to the self-picture of Poles. The last (2010) EXPO exhibition in Shanghai provided an excellent opportunity for the first serious campaign promoting Poland in China. Its main idea was to use culture-specific concepts shared by both Poland and China to start interest in our country and by showing that geographical distance does not always imply a cultural gap create a common platform for a dialogue. The idea turned out to be a great success – Poland became more familiar and easier to understand. Moreover, the Polish pavilion got the main prize for its architecture and appearance and Poland was awarded the *Best Promotion of the Country Award* in the category *2010 CBN Marketing Awards for Expo 2010 Shanghai China* [<http://www.expo2010.com.pl/#/pl/news/e11e8f090ed8302b3650539702b2a17e>].

Three motives were used to shorten the cultural distance between Poland and China. The material used to build the Polish pavilion looked like paper, which recalled the old Chinese tradition of paper making. Its walls, however, were not plain but richly decorated with floral motives taken from the Polish paper cuttings from the region of Łowicz. They are well known in Poland and they represent traditional folk art, which allowed to show, in a natural way, Polish folk art to the Chinese visitors. The walls played one more function: they were like pages of a book where important events from Polish history were narrated by the Krakow Dragon. The animal belongs to the two cultures although its symbolism is very different. In Chinese culture it stands for happiness, prosperity and all other positive features while the Krakow Dragon immortalized in the legend of a smart shoemaker and a beautiful princess is an evil monster devouring the most beautiful girls from the city and its neighbourhood. A wedding ceremony between a Chinese girl wearing a traditional Polish folk costume from Krakow and a Pole dressed in a typical Chinese outfit was used to symbolically seal the relationships between the two countries. The married couple was to live in an apartment in a housing estate built on the territory of EXPO.

Once more, culture played a crucial role in the success of the Polish marketing campaign and resulted in an authentic interest of the Chinese in Poland.

### **3. A cultural profile of Japanese tourists – the impact of mother culture**

As follows from the research carried out on behalf of travel Web site Expedia among people from the hospitality business (15,000 respondents) in twelve European countries in 2006, Japanese tourists, for example, are very attractive customers in the sense that they usually spend more money on their holidays and are bigger shoppers than an average European. Their often excessive shopping has both economic and cultural roots. European prices of luxury goods are lower than in Japan and as far as the cultural motivation is concerned, it is related



to a tradition of *omiage* and *senbetsu*. The first term stands for an obligation to buy a gift for family members, friends and co-workers while on holidays and the second one refers to a sum of money offered to the traveller by his/her family and friends before his/her journey which should be reciprocated with *omiage* [“Jen na wakacjach” 2003, p. 31], “The best tourists in the world are...”. Japanese tourists are demanding, they look for high standards of service and tourist amenities but at the same time they are generous with tips. It is interesting to notice that they appreciate very much even insignificant and inexpensive gifts from the hotel staff as a token of esteem paid to them. Moreover, they are very polite, respectful towards others, especially the elderly, open to new experiences and curious to see new places. They appreciate the culture they visit and they show a sheer interest in it. They are also very quiet and clean although their cleaning rituals may sometimes cause problems to the hotel owners. They expect to have in their bathroom both a shower and a bathtub. The first serves to proper washing and the second for a ritual relaxation, which means that the Japanese take their bath only after having taken a shower.

The Japanese, generally speaking, do not grumble and do not show emotions, especially the negative ones even when a problem appears. Then they would try to find a solution to it rather than look for the person to be blamed for it [Bugaj 2007, p. 49]. As they usually have only short holidays they want to visit as much as they can. If they travel on their own, they are usually well prepared and they know what they exactly want to visit, which means that they look for specific kind of information.

The choice of a holiday destination by Japanese tourists depends, to a large extent, on three other factors. Safety is very highly valued by them and is given priority on the list of their expectations. The ability to communicate in English is also very important for them. Finally, as the distance between Japan and Europe is rather big, at first they will consider the countries which can be directly reached by plane. (Poland is planning to start direct flights to Japan in 2012. Moreover, since 2001 Polish visas have not been necessary for the Japanese tourists, which should encourage them to visit Poland [Licznarski 2003, p. 52]. They also tend to visit a different country each time abroad choosing various directions depending on the thematic aspect of the trip. Europe, especially France, Austria, Spain, Italy, Germany and Switzerland are valued for their culture and history, especially the places and monuments which are on the UNESCO list. They are also impressed by wild nature, colourful autumn trees, green plains and open spaces, which they lack in Japan, a mountainous country with a very high density of population [Hałas 2006, Kubiszyn-Puka 2010, Kaczmarek, Stasiak, Włodarczyk 2005, p. 4]. New York, San Francisco and Hawaii in the USA, France and Italy in Europe as well as Singapore and Hong Kong in Asia are their favourite shopping destinations [www.pot.gov.pl]. It can be also observed their growing interest in Central and Eastern European countries as well as their Asian neighbour

countries, China, South Korea and Thailand. The latter preference is related to the world economic crises and the exchange rate of yen [Bugaj 2007, p. 53; Walas 2008]. Western Europe and North America have become rather expensive destinations, especially considering the fact students and retired persons have become quite mobile lately. The Japanese tourist pattern has been adopted by most Asian tourists.

Some behaviour of the Japanese tourists may cause misunderstandings or even serious problems if they miss a proper cultural interpretation which usually uses one of the following key-concepts: *enryo*, *wa*, *amae*, *on* and *seishin* [Bugaj 2007, p. 57]. *Enryo* is an interesting combination of ceremony, ritual, respect, self-effacement by means of refraining from directly expressed wishes and opinion, especially if the latter oppose general opinions. It also stands for a distance in relationships with elderly people and superiors. *Wa* relates to *enryo* as it implies harmony in a group, a kind of *groupism* understood as a group solidarity and anti-individualism as well as a tendency to avoid any open conflict. *Amae*, in turn, which roughly speaking can be translated as a need to be loved and accepted, can be observed mainly in the behaviour of young Japanese girls. They let others influence their decisions and accept the relationships similar to the ones between a mother and her child. *Seishin* can be understood as a strong character with such qualities as discipline, perseverance, loyalty and an “army spirit” which help attain self-perfection and mastery. *On*, which originates from a Samurai ethics, results from social relationships and stands for obligation to pay back any favour, small or big [Benedict 2003, p. 123].

Summing up, a cultural dimension of personal satisfaction of Japanese tourists rooted in their mother culture can be achieved if they are shown a non-imposing hospitality and respect tailored to their respective social position and age. Relationships, often reduced to ritual and ceremony, should be harmonious, polite, based on authority-related hierarchy. Some special attention should be paid to face preservation which is manifested in the case of young women as a strong need for acceptance.

#### **4. A cultural profile of a Polish tourist product created for the Japanese tourist market**

A more consistent promotion of Poland in Japan started as late as in 2004 when thanks to joint efforts of the Polish Embassy in Tokyo, the Polish Tourist Organisation and the Club Tourism International Inc. co-operating with the Kinki Nippon Tourist Co. Ltd., a Polish Centre of Tourist Information was open in Tokyo [*Regulamin Polskiego Ośrodka Informacji Turystycznej w Tokio* 2007, p. 3]. Before Poland was promoted together with other countries from the Visegrad group (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) using the slogan “A European Quartet – one melody” [www.serwisturystyczny.pap.pl]. In 2005 the EXPO exhibition in Aichi became a good opportunity to present Poland to



the Japanese. The leitmotiv was the slogan “See the beauty of Nature” and the topic of all the events was “The wisdom of Nature”. Both of them referred to the Japanese sensitivity to natural beauty and its various manifestations. The shape of the Polish pavilion and its design which was to present a variety of Polish landscapes – from the Tatra Mountains to the Baltic coast - as well as the materials used for it – steel frames filled with wicker - illustrated the concept. It also presented Poland as a country where people live in harmony with nature and combine modernity with tradition and natural beauty. Moreover, for Polish people, nature is a rich source of inspiration and creativity in a civilisational perspective.

A study tour to Poland for JATA (Japan Association for Travel Agents) representatives organized in 2010 resulted in a month of promotion of Poland in the Nagoya region in the trains and on train stations. Traditional features of Polish cultural landscape combined with its natural beauty dominated in it [www.pot.gov.pl]. Thus, the main challenge for the Polish marketers and copywriters is to communicate successfully all the strong and multiple aspects of Poland to the potential visitors and to help them discover its rich cultural variety inherited from the past and also dynamically created today. Following the research by the Instytut Marki Polskiej (Institute of Polish Brand), Poland has already been perceived as a brand product although a little bit blurred and vague as it is not univocally associated with one distinct product [Walas 2008, p. 42]. Moreover, the Japanese tourists, for example, cannot identify a typical Polish souvenir, which would also strengthen the image of Poland. Amber, regional craft, food, vodka and mead as well as duvet, which they enumerate [www.malopolskie.pl], are either representative of particular Polish regions or even Baltic countries (amber). Such a situation needs more consistent efforts to highlight seven categories of typically Polish subproducts creating a complex and easily recognized image of Poland. They are the following:

1. vitality – Poland a country of young people, full of energy and enthusiasm, looking to the future rather than to the past
2. culture – both cultural heritage and its modern manifestations
3. physical beauty – rich, unspoilt nature, variety of landscapes,
4. people – hospitable, imaginative and creative, “Slavonic soul”, beautiful women
5. health – nature, ecology, freshness, natural ecological products
6. cities – monuments, architecture, history, individual narration, soul, multiculturalism
7. famous Poles – John-Paul II, Copernicus, Canaletto, Saint Adalbert, Witt Stwosz [Analiza wyników badań wizerunku... 2008].

Although culture has been treated as a distinct category in the above list, it is also present in all of them. Its varied manifestations are either their background or an important, sometimes even dominating constituent.

A tourist product for the Japanese should creatively use their already existing positive associations (top of minds), minimise or even eliminate the negative ones and properly explore these elements which are important for Polish national identity and character. The first group of assets embrace beautiful nature, historical and cultural monuments, good traditional cuisine, famous people – Chopin (24% of all responses), Marie Skłodowska-Curie, John-Paul II, Wałęsa and also Andrzej Wajda who received a very prestigious award for his life achievement from the Japanese Emperor and thanks to whose perseverance a Museum of Japanese Culture and Technology was put up in Krakow (it is the only such a museum in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe). They also highly value Polish family life, ability to combine successfully private and professional life, friendliness, interpersonal relations, co-operation and equal rights of men and women. Development, patriotism, tradition and religiosity belong to other positive opinions. Cold weather, greyness, dullness, tragic national history and poverty together with relatively low prices because Poland is not in the Euro zone, constitute their negative counterparts [www.malopolska.pl].

Considering the list of positive and negative evaluations as well as expectations, the core of Polish tourist product should not be changed: Warsaw and Żelazowa Wola, Krakow with Wieliczka and Auschwitz are a tourist must. As for other attractions, Polish tour operators should consider to show the third important Polish city. They should also explore the cultural potential of middle-size and small cities with their slow pace of life, tiny streets winding around charming market squares, rich and varied architecture, many pieces of which deserve attention. Polish manor houses together with their parks and gardens serve as the best introduction to Polish noble culture which is the source of Polish cultural ethos. The wooden architecture of orthodox and catholic churches, wind- or watermills, some of which are on the UNESCO list or the Trail of Traditional Craft, both in the South of Poland – the Podkarpacie region – can constitute an interesting thematic tour which will clearly distinguish Poland from other European countries. The experience would be even more interesting if the visit could be combined with some folk traditions the visitors could directly experience, e.g. one-day workshops introducing different aspects of Polish folk culture, such as, for example, dancing, bread baking, Easter egg decorating, Easter palms making, paper cuttings, crochet, regional embroideries, *pierogi* making, traditional liqueur making, paper flower making, wicker etc.

As follows from the respondents' answers they would appreciate very much a chance to actively experience Polish culture outside big centres and well known regions. Polish multiculturalism of the Eastern borderlands where Orthodox religion has been for centuries co-existing with the Roman Catholic Church and

even Islam offers an excellent opportunity to discover the Poland which is even little known for the Poles themselves. This part of Poland has always played an important role in the Polish tradition of tolerance and fight for national freedom. It was a cradle of patriotism, and in the past a land of Mickiewicz and Miłosz, two poets who have earned a place in the Pantheon of Polish culture.

Taking into consideration the Japanese sensitivity and fascinations, the tourist product should also explore open spaces, green plains and unspoilt, wild landscapes as well as national parks, forests and recreational areas which are the green Poland. The Dunajec River gorges and Zakopane are classics but the Lake District in the Mazuria region together with Roztocze in the South-East of Poland and the Baltic coast are still waiting for being discovered. The Białowieża Forest, the Solski Forest, especially its Janowski Landscape Park on the Biłgoraj Plain would be a nice escape from the city and also a chance to show a less well known but not less interesting face of Poland.

People are a great asset of Poland, which should be considered while creating tourist products. It is true that language, especially in the case of Japanese tourists is a big obstacle, but on the other hand, even some rudimentary English can be useful to facilitate direct contacts, eg. during folk art workshops, various life events, visits in ethnographic open air museums. The Japanese value hospitality very highly, and Poland is well known for it. Making it a significant part of the experience of Poland is a value added. It communicates respect for the visitor and thoughtfulness, which, considering the role of buzz marketing in Japan, will pay back in a growing number of visitors to Poland.

The Polish tourist product should be tailored to individual needs and interests of each group of tourists and possess a soul, which is possible if the tour operators learn to look at Poland with “new eyes”. The ability to meet the challenge allows them to discover, first for themselves and then for the tourist the Poland which will be both a familiar and fresh experience. Its familiarity will stem from the tour allowing the potential tourist to have met their expectations resulting from their mother culture. Its fresh aspect, in turn, will derive from the image of Poland being free from cultural stereotypes and thus more authentic, convincing, fuller and interesting, created by imaginative and sensitive people who are proud of sharing their highlights of their culture with foreign visitors.

### **Abstract**

*Contrary to its logics, a global tourist market demands a continual modifications and segmentation of tourist products which, although addressed to a mass tourist, should be tailored to his/her individual and mother/target culture-specific needs and expectations. Consequently, culture plays an important role in the process and it should be approached from two different but complementary perspectives. First of all, the mother culture of the potential customer as well as the target culture of the receiving country should be considered. The first one accounts for the decisions which products to buy and the second*

*one, which determines the way the hospitality business operates in terms of services and tour content, is responsible for the customer's satisfaction from the tourist product s/he has acquired. When the respective cultures of the hospitality business people and of the tourists are similar, their influence on a market success of a tourist product is small but when they are very different, e.g. Asians vs. European cultures, they can create serious problems for both parties.*

*A growing importance of Asian tourists, Japanese, Chinese and Korean, on the European tourist market constitutes a challenge for hospitality business, especially in former communist countries which contrary to Western European countries not only have to establish themselves as new tourist destinations and compete with the renown ones but also to adjust their offer to the tastes of their Asian customers.*

*The Polish Chamber of Tourism has been involved in a campaign to market Poland for the Japanese tourists and to make it one of their favourite holiday destinations. However its efforts must be paralleled with an attempt to create a proper tourist product which will appeal to the Japanese as far as its cultural content and service culture are concerned. The present article discusses the double occurrence of culture in the Polish tourist product for the Japanese market.*

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